

"LOUD THEY MOCKED AT THE CLUMSY CHURL."

THE CHRISTMAS SONG OF CAEDMON.

BY BERTHA E. BUSH.

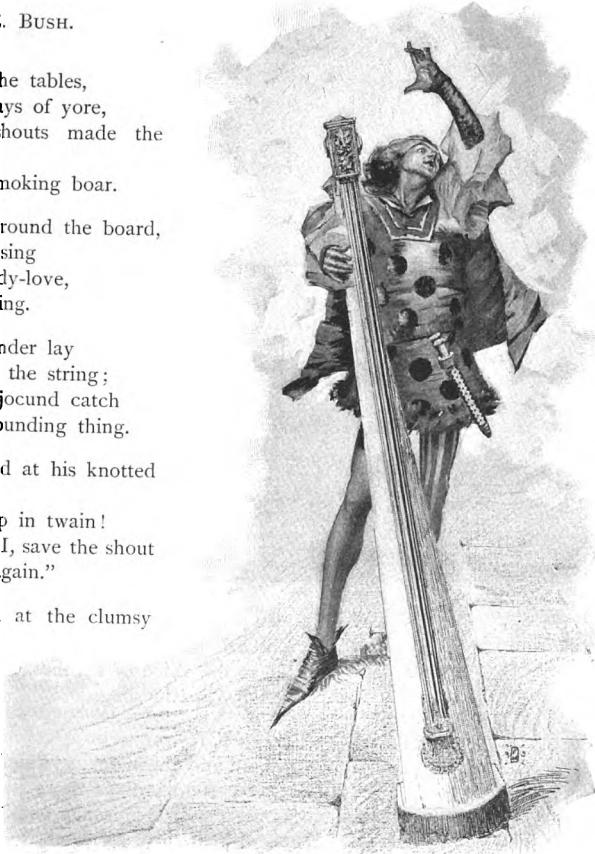
THEY gathered round the tables,
In the rough, glad days of yore,
And their boisterous shouts made the
arches ring
At the sight of the smoking boar.

They passed the harp around the board,
And every one must sing
For the honor of his lady-love,
Or the glory of his king.

The page he lilted a tender lay
As he lightly touched the string;
The yeoman shouted a jocund catch
As he thumped the sounding thing.

But the herdsman looked at his knotted
hands:
"I should rend the harp in twain!
And never a song know I, save the shout
That calls the cattle again."

Then loud they mocked at the clumsy
churl,
Till he rose with
a w k w a r d
stride
And made his
way to the
cattle-sheds,
His shame and
grief to hide.



But lo! as he slept on the straw, he caught
 The glint of an angel's wing:
 God's angel placed in his hand a harp,
 And bade the herdsman sing.

"I cannot, Lord, for my clumsy hands,
 And my voice so harsh and loud,
 And I have no words."

"I will give thee words."
 And Cædmon obedient bowed.



The herdsman stood in his laborer's smock,
 Nor questioned, but ere long
 Like a child at the voice of his mother,
 He opened his lips in song.

The lifting page and the mocking knight
 And the yeoman went their way;
 Their deeds are done, their songs forgot,
 But the herdsman sings for aye.